

# Crystal Cove

## State Park



### Our Mission

The mission of the California Department of Parks and Recreation is to provide for the health, inspiration and education of the people of California by helping to preserve the state's extraordinary biological diversity, protecting its most valued natural and cultural resources, and creating opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreation.

ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER  
Governor

MIKE CHRISMAN  
Secretary for Resources

RUTH COLEMAN  
Director, California State Parks



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**P. O. Box 942896** (800) 777-0369  
**Sacramento, CA** (916) 653-6995, outside the U.S.  
711, TTY relay service  
**94296-0001**

[www.parks.ca.gov](http://www.parks.ca.gov)

**Crystal Cove State Park**  
8471 N. Coast Highway  
Laguna Beach, CA 92651  
(949) 494-3539

[www.crystalcovestatepark.com](http://www.crystalcovestatepark.com)

*The ocean and shoreline,  
visible from nearly all points  
along Pacific Coast Highway,  
dominate the coastal portion  
of the park. From the high  
ridges above Moro Canyon,  
visitors enjoy an expansive  
view of the ocean,  
the interior valleys  
and the mountain ranges  
beyond.*

**C**rystal Cove State Park's rolling surf, wide sandy beaches, tide pools, gently sloping hills, and deeply wooded canyons and ridges provide a delightful contrast to its urban surroundings. Located off busy Pacific Coast Highway between Corona del Mar and Laguna Beach, Crystal Cove is one of Orange County's largest remaining examples of open space and natural seashore.

The park's Mediterranean climate is characterized by moist, foggy summer mornings, with the fog burning off by midmorning to bring warm, sunny days and cool evenings.

## **PARK HISTORY**

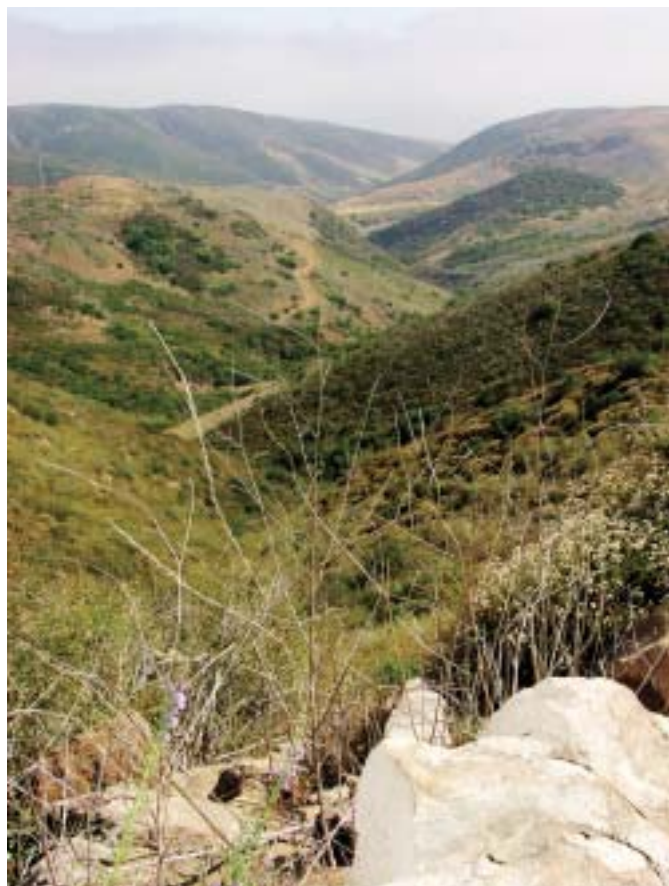
### **Native People**

For thousands of years the native people of this area established their villages near dependable sources of water, from which they set out on seasonal gathering and hunting trips. Shellfish, waterfowl, and a variety of plants and animals were among their food sources. Their earliest known contact with non-natives was in 1769, when the Gaspar de Portolá expedition encountered them on its way up the coast in search of the bay at Monterey. With the arrival of Spanish missionaries, the native people were drawn into the mission system and given the name Juaneño or Gabrieleño, depending on which mission—San Juan Capistrano or San Gabriel—they were part of.

### **The Ranchos and the Irvine Company**

In 1837 Don José Andres Sepulveda named the Spanish land grant he received "Rancho

San Joaquin." The area was once part of Mission San Juan Capistrano. In 1864 the debt-ridden Sepulveda sold 50,000 acres of land to a group of sheep ranchers; by 1878 sheepman James Irvine owned 110,000 acres stretching from the Santa Ana River to the ocean. James Irvine, Jr. formed the Irvine Company in 1894 and changed the Irvine Ranch operations from sheep raising to field crops and olive and citrus groves.



*Backcountry wilderness area*

### **Japanese American Farm Community**

Once acres of truck gardens lined the Pacific Coast Highway. In the 1930s Japanese American tenant farmers sold surplus fruits and vegetables from roadside stands along the inland coastal terraces of the Irvine Ranch property. With the onset of America's involvement in World War II, the Japanese farmers were removed to internment camps, and tenant farming on the Irvine lands came to an end.

### **The Cottages**

The history of recreation here began in the early 1900s, when people were beginning to "hit the road" in their automobiles. For anyone who could afford a Model T, an outing to the cove became a regular event. Taking note of the cove's possibilities, the film industry began using it as a filming location. Photos dating back to 1917 show the palm trees and thatched roofs often used by filmmakers to portray South Sea island locations. In 1927 the little pocket beach was given the name Crystal Cove.

Well before its dedication in 1928, the Pacific Coast Highway was offering motorists miles of ocean vistas. With this increased interest in the cove, the Irvine family generously allowed friends and ranch employees to pitch tents and build temporary shelters there. Modest, palm-thatched cottages began to appear around 1917, adding to the Pacific island ambiance.

In the 1920s the cargo of a capsized lumber ship washed ashore, providing residents with more building materials.



During prohibition rum smugglers often used the cove to smuggle their booty ashore. For years after the law was repealed, bottles of rum could still be found buried in the sands of the beach.

All through the 1930s, cottages were built—along a boardwalk, on the beach and on the bluffs. As the families inhabiting them grew, so did the little houses; wings extended outward, and porches, decks and second stories were added.

In the late 1930s, the Irvine Company, still owning the land and faced with management concerns, told those with cottages that they either had to move

them to another location or give up ownership to the Irvine Company. A few cottages were moved, but most people gave them up and leased them back from the Irvine Company—a step that effectively protected the cottages from private sale to developers and maintained the community's 1920s/1930s character.

In 1979 California State Parks acquired the land as a public state park, and the Historic District was nominated to the National Register of Historic Places. The vernacular style of architecture—representative of a Southern California beach community during the 1920s and 1930s—quickly earned Crystal Cove a National Register listing.

## NATURAL HISTORY

### Coastal Strand

The sandy beach is 3.2 miles long, bordered by hardy, fleshy leafed and deep rooted plants growing low against salt-sprayed dunes. At low tide, tide pools are exposed along the rocky shoreline.



*Live Oak*

### Coastal Bluffs

At high tides the surf laps against the base of 80-foot bluffs. There are two bluff-top public parking areas, Reef Point and Pelican Point, that offer access to the beach.

### Flora

The park has several distinct plant communities—specific habitats with conditions that favor some types of plants and animals over others.

### Coastal Sage Scrub

Widespread throughout the park, this dense shrub community occurs across the coastal terrace, along the sides of lower Moro Canyon, and extensively in upper Moro Canyon, especially on the canyon's damper north-facing reaches. The resinous, highly flammable vegetation regenerates quickly after burning.



*Historic District*



### Annual Grasses

These introduced grasses grow extensively on the terraces and to a lesser extent in lower Moro Canyon.

### Southern Riparian Woodland

Along the small watershed represented by seasonal Moro Creek,

sycamore, oak (including a specimen of a hybridized version of oak) and willows occur. Undergrowth includes elderberry shrubs.

### Fauna

The wildlife in the intertidal areas of the park includes purple shore crabs, sea hares and sea anemones. At higher levels, including the bluffs and terraces, ground squirrels, cottontail rabbits, western fence lizards, California king snakes, California

gnatcatchers, California quail and deer are found. The park's open space areas offer habitat for deer mice, coyotes, bobcats, roadrunners, gopher snakes, western toads, redtail hawks, California thrashers, and two species of rattlesnakes.

### RECREATION

#### Backcountry Primitive Camping

There is a fairly strenuous 3-mile, uphill hike to 3 separate camping areas. Campers must pack in and out all of their supplies, including water.

#### Backcountry Trails

There is access to 2,400 undeveloped acres from the Moro Canyon parking lot. The trails are open to hiking, biking and equestrian use. Maps are available at the ranger station.

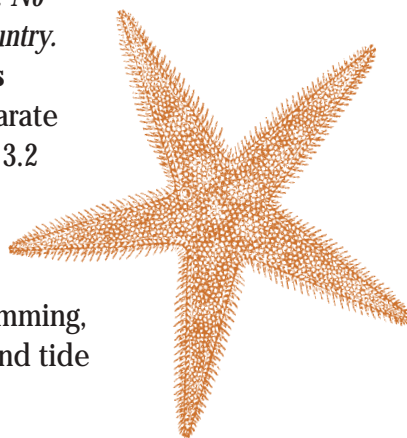
*No smoking or open flames in the backcountry. No dogs in the backcountry.*

#### Beach Activities

There are 7 separate coves along the 3.2 miles of beach, offering spectacular sunbathing, swimming, surfing, diving and tide pool exploring.

### SPECIAL EVENTS

The park welcomes special events including weddings, picnics, parties and film shoots. For more information call the park.



### MOVIES MADE AT CRYSTAL COVE

1918

*Treasure Island*

1920

*The Sea Wolf*

1923

*Stormswept*

1927

*The Wreck of the Hesperus*

1928

*Sadie Thompson*

*Half A Bride*

*White Shadows in the South Seas*

1929

*The Isle of Lost ships*

1932

*Rain*

1934

*Treasure Island*

1938

*The Great Heart*

1944

*To Have And Have Not*

1951

*Two Of A Kind*

1974

*Herbie Rides Again*

1985

*The Creator*

1988

*Beaches*







*Lifeguard keeps a watchful eye on swimmers.*

### WATER SAFETY TIPS

- **Swim with a friend**—Supervise children closely—flotation devices are not reliable.
- **Water use areas**—Swimming, surfing and kayaking zones are separate from each other; check to make sure your activity is taking place in the proper zone. Contact park staff for additional beach safety information.
- **Rip currents**—If you become caught in a rip current, relax, swim parallel to the shore until the pull stops, and then swim back to shore. If you are unable to return to the beach, tread water and wave for assistance.
- **Avoid spinal injuries**—Do not dive head-first into unfamiliar waters.
- **Be alert**—Never turn your back on the ocean. Sudden waves can sweep you away from bluffs or tide pool areas.

### NEARBY STATE PARKS

- **Huntington State Beach**  
Pacific Coast Highway  
(Highway 1) at Beach Blvd.  
(Highway 39)  
(714) 536-1454
- **Doheny State Beach**  
off Pacific Coast Highway  
(Highway 1) at Dana Point  
Harbor at Del Obispo St.  
(949) 496-6171

### ACCESSIBLE FEATURES &

**Picnicking**—There are accessible picnic areas and restrooms throughout the park

on both the coastal and inland areas. Refer to the park map.

**Trails**—The paved coastal Multi-Use Trail is an accessible path along coastal bluffs. It offers wildlife and scenic viewing with occasional interpretive displays.

**Beach/shore access**—Accessibility to the beach is at the Crystal Cove Historic District and El Moro Beach.

**Exhibits and programs**—The park visitor centers at El Moro and the Historic District are generally accessible.

### PLEASE REMEMBER

- Park hours are 6:00 a.m. to sunset, daily, year round.
- Possession of alcohol is prohibited throughout the park.
- Dogs must be kept on a leash no more than 6 feet long. They may be walked on paved areas only. Dogs are not permitted on the beach or in the backcountry and must not be left unattended.
- All tide pool specimens are protected by state law. Collection of shells and rocks is prohibited.
- All natural, cultural and historical park resources are protected.
- Stay on established trails. Children and pets should be closely supervised.
- Do not climb on or approach the cliff faces—they are unstable and can collapse under you.
- No fires are allowed on or in the sand. Hibachis or barbecues are permitted, but coals must be removed from the park. No open flames are permitted in the backcountry.

This park is supported in part by two nonprofit park cooperating associations. For more information contact:

Crystal Cove Interpretive Association  
P. O. Box 4352  
Laguna Beach, CA 92652  
(949) 497-7648

Crystal Cove Alliance  
3535 East Coast Hwy, PMB #360  
Corona Del Mar, CA 92625  
(949) 640-5220



**Legend**

	Freeway		Accessible Feature		Food Services		Restrooms
	Major Hwy		Bicycle Trail		Locked Gate		Surfing
	Paved Road		Campground		Parking		Viewpoint
	Unpaved Road		Environmental Campground		Picnic Area		Overnight Cottages
	Trail		Diving		Ranger Station		Park Building
	Boardwalk						
	Water Depth (feet)						



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